

Strange Rare and Peculiar Symptoms

We have all heard the term "strange, rare and peculiar symptoms" but what exactly does it mean?

There can be two kinds of "strange, rare and peculiar symptoms" or SRPS; the first are those that are odd, weird or unheard of such as 'delusion that he feels like a soda water bottle' and the second kind tends to be more contrary to what you would expect. An example is the burning stomach pain of Arsenicum that is better from applied heat such as a hot water bottle. It is also strange to have the absence of a feature that is usually striking in a disease, such as absence of a rash with measles; this is a peculiarity that relates to the patient and is a very important symptom.

A "strange, rare and peculiar" symptom is usually much more valuable when prescribing than the more usual and common symptoms that relate to a disease or disorder as it gives you a distinct differentiation in a group of remedies. These symptoms are what you are looking for when taking the case and it pays to memorise some of the more common ones. For example an out of character craving for milk in the acute phase of a skin disorder, flu or rheumatic pain is an SRPS of Rhus tox.

Such a symptom can be mental, general or particular; it cannot be a common symptom.

Among particular symptoms you also give preference to the 'strange, rare and peculiar' ones. Angina with pain extending up into the occiput take preference over heart pain extending down the arm, because the former is more strange and unusual whereas it is common to have pain extending down the arm in angina. The strange mental symptoms may often be of less value than the peculiar generals or particulars.

"Strange, rare and peculiar" symptoms often become keynotes although not all keynotes are strange symptoms, for instance, "hunger at 11.00 a.m." is a keynote of *Sulphur* but it is not a "strange, rare and peculiar" symptom; the same with the 4.00-8.00 p.m. aggravation of *Lycopodium*, but a keynote which is also a peculiar symptom which is also a keynote of *Calc*, *Alum*, and *Nit-ac*, "craves indigestible things like chalk, earth, and slate pencils."

The individualisation, which is an essential part of homoeopathy, is greatly helped by the understanding and use of "strange, rare and peculiar" symptoms, which Hahnemann himself especially stressed.

These strange symptoms are often difficult to gather, as patients may feel awkward or ashamed of telling anything so peculiar, so inconsequential or absurd; however especially where these are generals they prove of enormous value as parts of the totality of the symptoms.

Next month we will explore **Speed of action**.